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Conference Abstract

Bryophytes of Ghana

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Abstract

There is currently limited information on plant biodiversity from Ghana. Most of the information openly available has been published by the Ghana Herbarium at the Department of Plant and Environmental Biology, University of Ghana. The Ghana Herbarium has over 100,000 specimens from Ghana and other West African countries. Of these approximately 85% of the specimen labels have been digitized. The database contains information including species names, taxonomic family, barcode number, name of collector(s), locality data, date of collection, description of species and uses of the plants. Data were captured using Botanical Research and Herbarium Management *Software* (BRAHMS) software and is openly available on Global Biodiversity Information Facility (GBIF) (http://www.gbif.org/country/GH/publishing). Less than 1% of the herbarium collection contains bryophyte information of Ghana.

Even though bryophytes are an often overlooked flora, Ghana has a high diversity of bryophytes. Indeed Ghana has an enormous biomass of bryophytes, particularly in the humid forest areas, that is bound to contribute significantly to the water-retentive capacity of the Ghanaian forest, absorbing water quickly and releasing it slowly. It is clear that the bryophytes are an important part of the ecosystem generally, helping to stabilize the hillsides and acting as a source of water. As very little is known about Ghana's bryophyte flora, a short expedition was undertaken in the Atewa Forest in 2014. A total of 164 species were added to the herbarium collection, including about 58 new to Ghana and at least one new species (*Cololejeunea* sp. yet to be described).

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The Ghana Herbarium recognises the growing need for digitization across its collections. Data from bryophytes specimens in the Ghana Herbarium and other Ghanaian herbaria as well as other data types on Ghanaian bryophytes will need to be captured using appropriate workflows, technologies and comply with Darwin Core standards. There is also paucity of observational and bryophyte abundance data. This presentation will review the current status of biodiversity information on bryophytes from Ghana and biodiversity informatics activities at Ghana Herbarium. It will also explore ways forward for digitization which incudes capturing the information on the already existing bryophyte specimens in the Ghana Herbarium and the newly added collections using BRAHMS software.

Keywords

Ecology, Bryophytes, Digitization, Collections Management,Database

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Conflicts of interest

There are no conflicts of interest.